

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI  
NORTHERN DIVISION

SHAWN MACKEY PLAINTIFF  
VERSUS NO. 3:23-CV-233-DPJ-ASH  
JOHN PIGOTT, ET AL. DEFENDANTS

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DEPOSITION OF CYNTHIA JILES

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APPEARANCES NOTED HEREIN

DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2024  
PLACE: MISSISSIPPI ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE  
550 HIGH STREET  
JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI  
TIME: 9:30 a.m.

REPORTED BY: AMANDA MAGEE WOOTTON, CSR, RPR  
CSR #1238

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1 assistant?

2 A Eric Clark.

3 Q Did you have any other positions other than  
4 executive assistant while Eric Clark was the  
5 secretary -- well, was the executive director of MCCB?

6 A Yes.

7 Q What other titles?

8 A Transitioned into human resources, and the  
9 title was human resources, purchasing, and archives  
10 and history, archives scheduling coordinator.

11 Q So what did that consist of, the archives  
12 scheduling coordinator?

13 A To keep up with the state mandated archives  
14 schedule for records retention.

15 Q And were you keeping up with the records for  
16 retention for the MCCB?

17 A For the different -- I didn't keep up with  
18 those. I would send them out to the different  
19 divisions to make sure that they were keeping track.  
20 And I would submit those to Archives and History  
21 according to the schedule.

22 Q And do you still do that today?

23 A No.

24 Q And when did you stop acting as the  
25 coordinator for -- for archives -- well, the archives

1 Q Racial discrimination?

2 A No.

3 Q Sex discrimination?

4 A No.

5 Q Were you involved in the process to replace  
6 Eric Clark as the executive director?

7 MS. JOHNSON: Object to the form.

8 A Involved?

9 MS. ROSS: (Continuing.)

10 Q Through human resources.

11 A I was still in transition role as the  
12 executive assistant, and I received applications.

13 Q And when you say you received them,  
14 applications were directed -- or applicants were  
15 directed to send their applications directly to you?

16 A To the office.

17 Q Okay. And then what would your job be when  
18 those applications came in?

19 A To compile those records, assist Deborah  
20 Gilbert in creating the list of applicants and  
21 maintain those files.

22 Q And at that time, what role was Deborah  
23 Gilbert playing?

24 A Interim executive director.

25 Q Did you have any role other than compiling

1 the records?

2 A Scheduling the candidates.

3 Q Was there a search company that was used?

4 A Search company?

5 Q Yes. Or individuals who were employed by  
6 the board to conduct a search for Mr. Clark's  
7 replacement.

8 A At some point a gentleman from Alabama was  
9 used as a consultant.

10 Q Were applicants directed to send their  
11 applications to that gentleman?

12 A Not that I'm aware of.

13 Q So you would receive the applications.  
14 Did you tell me that you developed a list?

15 A I assisted Deborah Gilbert in maintaining  
16 the list.

17 Q And after the list was developed, you  
18 scheduled the candidates for interviews?

19 A Yes.

20 Q And how were the candidates chosen for  
21 interviews?

22 A I don't know.

23 Q So at this point you are not the assistant  
24 executive director of human resources?

25 A No.

1 Q So how would you know which candidate had  
2 been selected so you could notify them of an  
3 interview?

4 A I was provided a list.

5 Q Who gave you the list?

6 A Recollection, Deborah Gilbert.

7 Q How many sets of interviews?

8 MS. JOHNSON: Object to the form.

9 A Sets or candidates?

10 MS. ROSS: (Continuing.)

11 Q Well, sets. Or was there more than one set  
12 of interviews?

13 A I believe so. I'm actually not certain. I  
14 can't say for certain on that.

15 Q Okay. How many people interviewed?

16 A I believe three.

17 Q And who were they?

18 A Shawn Mackey, Andrea Mayfield. I can't  
19 think of his first name, the president of Itawamba,  
20 Allen. Jay Allen.

21 Q Besides developing the list and scheduling  
22 the interviews, did you play any other role?

23 A I was present to greet the candidates for  
24 interview and ushered them into the room for  
25 interview.

1 MS. ROSS: (Continuing.)

2 Q Had Kell ever supervised any employees  
3 before he was named interim executive director?

4 A During the course of his employment with us?

5 Q With anybody, that you know of.

6 A Oh, I can't speak to that because I don't  
7 know.

8 Q Well, speak on what you know about, then,  
9 MCCB.

10 A He hasn't at MCCB.

11 Q Okay. Thank you.

12 What position did Kell hold before becoming  
13 interim executive director?

14 A Director of communications and legislative  
15 services.

16 Q What were his job duties as the executive --  
17 as the director of communications and legislative  
18 services?

19 A He handled press releases as communications,  
20 addressed the press. And with the legislature he  
21 would go in every session to help draft and build  
22 those relationships with the legislators.

23 Q You said he helped to draft what?

24 A Legislation.

25 Q Have you ever seen any legislation Kell has



1 leave -- or make it appear as though McRight was not a  
2 member of the board when Mayfield was selected?

3 MS. JOHNSON: Object to the form.

4 A No.

5 MS. ROSS: (Continuing.)

6 Q What is this, ma'am?

7 A This is a list of those who served in  
8 executive director position until 1986 until present.

9 Q Did you compile that information?

10 A I did.

11 Q Okay. How many of them had Ph.D.s?

12 A I didn't look for that.

13 Q Well, before -- were you aware that before  
14 the job description was changed for a Master's degree,  
15 you had to have a Ph.D.?

16 A I was aware.

17 Q Okay. Were you aware of anyone who was ever  
18 selected who did not have a Ph.D. as required by the  
19 board's job description?

20 A Deborah Gilbert did not have a Ph.D.

21 Q She was never the executive director, was  
22 she?

23 A You asked me from this list. She served as  
24 interim.

25 Q Okay. And you -- and she did not go on from

1 interim to become the executive director, correct?

2 A Correct.

3 Q Okay. But Kell did? He's the only one on  
4 that list who was the interim who went on to become  
5 the executive director?

6 A Correct.

7 Q Okay. And that was only after the job  
8 description was changed, correct?

9 MS. JOHNSON: Object to the form.

10 A Timeline, correct.

11 MS. ROSS: (Continuing.)

12 Q Okay. Was Kell involved in the conversation  
13 concerning the changing of the job description?

14 A I don't know.

15 Q Do the minutes show that he was in the  
16 executive session when the job description was being  
17 discussed?

18 A The executive session says that Kell Smith  
19 was in the board room.

20 Q Okay. Well, not just in the board room,  
21 because it says -- those minutes reflect that he was  
22 in executive session, correct?

23 A Correct.

24 Q Okay. And where the job description was  
25 discussed?